

The Decision to Risk it All for The Giver:

A Thematic Unit focusing on

Lois Lowry's *The Giver*

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Part I: Introduction & Preface

“The Decision to Risk it All for The Giver”

Introduction:

I will be teaching my unit to 8th graders at West Millbrook Middle School located in North Raleigh. West Millbrook is on period scheduling with 7 periods in a day. Each of these periods is 50 minutes long. However, my classroom participates in Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) for the first 10 minutes of class, so that brings my instruction time each day to 40 minutes. My cooperating teacher is Ms. Nay, and she works with all of the other 8th grade LA teachers in a Professional Learning Community (PLC). The teachers all work together to ensure that they are teaching the same material at the same time throughout the year. All of 8th grade will be reading *The Giver* at the same time, and due to this there will not be enough copies of the book for students to take home. My teacher has 5 periods of Language Arts, two of which have AIG (Academically and Intellegently Gifted) clusters, and one that is an ICR (In Class Resource). The AIG clusters will be in literature circles during this unit and my cooperating teacher will be teaching them as well as another teacher's clusters. During those first two periods then, I will be working with the other teacher, Ms. Young, in teaching my unit. We will be focusing on reading and understanding *The Giver*. My classes are fairly diverse, with an equal distribution of white/Caucasian, African Americans, and Hispanics. The number of Asian and Indian students is almost negligible. Since my teacher does have ICR class, there is a probability of some students having an IEP. I will look in to this matter once the semester with my teacher begins so I will know if there are any exact modifications I will need. The classroom has only a few computers, but is equipped with a Smart Board. This should be sufficient for our technology needs for the duration of the unit.

Organizational Principle:

During this unit, the theme that we will be looking at specifically is ‘Risking It All’. The idea behind the students learning about risk, and in turn about risking it all, is so that they learn to understand that some choices require risk in order to obtain the result they are looking for. Risk is a great topic to talk with 8th graders about because more than likely they have already dealt with decisions where a risk was involved. Giving students scenarios to discuss that involve risk and risking it all is a great way to get them involved in talking about the theme.

Primary Subject Matter Focus:

The primary focus of this thematic unit is Lois Lowry's *The Giver*. In this text, a young boy is faced with many decisions to make that will affect the rest of his life. These decisions are big ones to make for a boy so young, and many come with certain risk. This is the reason why this book has been chosen as one of the texts that helps the students learn about the theme of “Risking It All”. This text is a great example for students to read when it comes to this theme (as well as reading about

dystopias) because it is centered on a young boy close in age to the students. The book is a great way for students to be introduced in to more complex thinking as well since they are not immediately confronted with the idea of a dystopia when the work begins.

Organizing Questions:

1. What motivates people to take risks?
2. Are risks necessary for change?
3. Do all worthy risks involve sacrifice?
4. Is the idea of risk accurately portrayed in literature?
5. Do we as a society take more risks today than society did 10 years ago? 50?

Goals:

After my students have completed this unit, I want them to understand the importance of the choices that they make every day. Students should come away from this unit knowing that sometimes risk is necessary in order to obtain the things we want in life. Students should also have an understanding in the affects that their decisions have on their life as well. By the end of this unit, students should also be able to think critically and begin to rationalize why the idea of a dystopia may seem like an ideal scenario. I want my students to become creative thinkers as well, in coming up with ways that a society could potentially become dystopian. Lastly, I want my students to understand the importance of risk in today's society for creating change.

General Unit Objectives:

Cognitive:

1. Students will be able to interpret the literature they are reading.
2. Students will be able to predict what will happen throughout the story.
3. Students will be able to identify the key elements of a dystopian novel.
4. Students will be able to understand key concepts throughout the unit.
5. Students will be able to defend their work.

Affective:

6. Students will be able to listen attentively to the readings.
7. Students will be able to follow the directions.
8. Students will be able to work cooperatively in a group setting.
9. Students will be able to communicate effectively in a class setting.
10. Students will be able to synthesize various materials to further their knowledge.

Performance:

11. Students will be able to create their own pieces of work.
12. Students will be able to share their work with the class.
13. Students will be able to reflect on their readings.
14. Students will be able to actively participate in a class.
15. Students will be able to demonstrate the standard conventions of English in their various works.

8th Grade Language Arts Common Core Standards:

Reading Standards

RI8.3- Analyze how a text makes connections among and distinctions between individuals, ideas, or events (e.g., through comparisons, analogies, or categories).

RI8.4- Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including analogies or allusions to other texts.

RI8.5- Analyze in detail the structure of a specific paragraph in a text, including the role of particular sentences in developing and refining a key concept.

RI8.6- Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how the author acknowledges and responds to conflicting evidence or viewpoints.

RI8.8- Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is sound and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; recognize when irrelevant evidence is introduced.

RI8.9- Analyze a case in which two or more texts provide conflicting information on the same topic and identify where the texts disagree on matters of fact or interpretation.

Writing Standards

W8.1- Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

W8.9- Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Speaking and Listening Standards

SL8.3- Delineate a speaker's argument and specific claims, evaluating the soundness of the reasoning and relevance and sufficiency of the evidence and identifying when irrelevant evidence is introduced.

Language Standards

L8.2- Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

Possible Unit Materials & Supplementary Texts:

Literature/Short Stories/Poetry

Class set of *The Giver*

Class Textbook containing:

"The Road Not Taken"*

"Debts" (from Out of the Dust)*

Film/Media Clips

Book Trailer

Technology Related Materials

Smart Board

Computers

Aesthetic Materials

Paper

Markers

Colored Pencils

Possible Activities/Instructional Strategies:

- Pre/During/Post reading discussions
- Exit Slips
- Stop/Start reading
- Group Quickwrites
- Journals
- Debate
- Class discussion
- Job assignment activity
- Create your own dystopia project
- Make up your own extended ending writing assignment
- Character charts
- Key details handout
- Small group work
- Presentations

Unit Map/Narrative Overview:

Day 1: Introduction to Risk (Lesson Plan Included)

Introduction and Bridge

- Class will begin with Sustained Silent Reading.
- I will then start off the class with a discussion for the students as to what risk is, and ask them whether or not they feel like they have ever taken a risk before.
 - If the students have taken a risk before, I will ask them to describe the decision they made and why it was a risk for them.
- Building from this discussion, I will ask the students what they think it means to 'risk it all'.
 - Ask them if they have any real world examples of people who have risked it all.

Small Group Work

- Once the discussion has ended, the class will be divided in to small groups of approximately 4-5 students per group.
 - Each group is given a scenario to read, and at the end of the scenario the group must decide how to respond to it, and if that response is a risk or not. They must also decide if there will be any consequences that result from their decision.
- After students have worked on their scenarios, we will convene as a class and each group will read out their scenario and the decision/risk that they made regarding their situation.

Direct Instruction

- Once the scenarios are over, we will discuss as a class the importance and necessity of sometimes taking risks.
 - I will ask the students if they think that their scenario would have ended differently had they not taken their initial risk (or if they now decided to take the risk).

- The next discussion with the class will center around whether or not the students think risk is sometimes necessary in order for change to happen.

Closing

- I will show students a book trailer for *The Giver* to introduce the novel.
- After this is over I will ask them to think about what it would be like to live in a world with no love, no feeling, and no choices.
 - The students are to think about this for homework, and I will let them know that this is what we will be opening with the next day in class.

Day 2: Beginning *The Giver*

Introduction and Bridge

- Class will begin with Sustained Silent Reading.
- Ask the students the question we left off with yesterday:
"What would it be like to live in a world with no love, no feeling, and no choices?"
 - I will ask for several volunteers to share their thoughts and opinions.
 - After several students have shared, I will then ask the students if they think that they would want to live in a society that implemented these aspects.

Direct Instruction

- After the discussion, we will begin reading.
- Today we will just read Chapter 1.
 - I will use the start/stop method while reading to help point out important aspects to the students as we read.

Closing

- I will introduce the students to the idea of journaling that they will be doing throughout the duration of this unit.
 - I will have students create a section in their class notebooks that will be designated for their entries.
 - Students will be required to write an entry every night reflecting on what we read in class. It does not have to be very in depth, but should show that the student was paying attention in class. Reflecting on what is read in class will help reinforce the story for them since they will not have their own copy to take home. Students will be allowed to write about characters, their feelings while reading the story, etc.
 - The journal entries will be collected at the end of each week and will be a completion grade only.

Day 3: What is a Dystopia?

Introduction and Bridge

- Class will begin with Sustained Silent Reading.
- I will give the students a quick review/synopsis of what we read yesterday.
- Before we begin reading today, I will ask if any of the students have any questions about the story and answer any accordingly.
- To transition, I will ask students if they know/can define what a utopia is.

- Building from this question, I will then ask students if they can infer what a dystopia is.

Direct Instruction

- I will discuss with the class what the defining characteristics of a dystopia are, and how a dystopia differs from a utopia.
- Today I will try to get through Chapters 2 & 3 with the class.

Closure

- As the reading for the day comes to an end, I will ask students for their initial reactions to the story. Are they interested in it yet?
- I will remind students to write in their nightly journal.

Day 4: A Day in the Life

Introduction and Bridge

- Class will begin with Sustained Silent Reading.
- I will give the students a quick review/synopsis of what we read yesterday.
- Before we begin reading today, I will ask if any of the students have any questions about the story and answer any accordingly.

Direct Instruction

- Before we begin today's reading, I will have the students complete a pre-writing to have them recall what we have read so far and to make any predictions that we may be reading about today.
- Today I will read Chapters 4 & 5.
- After Chapter 4, we will pause and have students complete a during writing segment where they will reflect on what has just happened, their reaction, and whether or not it was something they were expecting.

Closure

- After we have finished reading Chapter 5, the students will complete a post writing where they will write their reactions to what we read today and if they enjoyed it and thought that it made the story more interesting.
- I will tell students to think of any questions they may have because they will be taking a quiz tomorrow.
- As students leave, I will remind them to write in their journals because I will be collecting them at the end of class the following day.

Day 5: Making Predictions

Introduction and Bridge

- Class will begin with Sustained Silent Reading.
- I will give the students a quick review/synopsis of what we read yesterday.
- Before we begin reading today, I will ask if any of the students have any questions about the story and answer any accordingly.

Quiz Time

- I will pass out the quiz to students, and go over the directions with them so that they become familiar with what is on the quiz beforehand.
- I will put a timer up on the board, and inform the students that they have 15 minutes to complete the quiz.
- Students will turn the quizzes in to me as they finish.

Direct Instruction

- After the quiz we will transition in to the day's lesson on making predictions.
- I will ask the students if they ever make predictions. Do they make them regarding sports games? Their grades?
- After a brief discussion about why we make predictions, I will tell the students that we are going to be making predictions about the book today.
- Students will then write down predictions they have for the characters, the plot, and possible major events.
 - I will explain to the students that their predictions need to be based on concrete evidence they have that would support their prediction.
- As the students are finishing, I will share my predictions that I made with them so that they have more examples.

Closure

- I will collect the students' journal entries for this past week.
- As I collect their journals I will inform them to start a new sheet for their next set of entries.
- Once I have their journal entries, I will hand them each an index card where they will write down a vocabulary word that they have found interesting, and whether or not they know the definition. If they don't know the definition, then they should take a guess as to what they think it means.
 - This is their exit pass, and students will hand it to me as they leave the classroom.

Day 6: Anticipation

Introduction and Bridge

- Class will begin with Sustained Silent Reading.
- I will give the students a quick review/synopsis of what we read yesterday.
- Before we begin reading today, I will ask if any of the students have any questions about the story and answer any accordingly.

Direct Instruction

- Today I will be reading Chapters 6 & 7.
- I will use the Start/Stop method while reading in order to help students grasp any important concepts.
- After the reading is complete, the students will be completing a Mad Talk, Soft Talk, Fast Talk writing assignment.
 - Students will be writing about the following prompt:
If you were in Jonas' position, write about your feelings about being passed over during the assignment ceremony.
 - As we write each example, I will explain how they are to write each example.

Closure

- I will pass back the students' first week of journal entries.
- As I pass back the journal entries, I will ask the students how they enjoyed the Mad Talk, Soft Talk, Fast Talk assignment

- I will then ask the students what kind of work they would like to do during rest of this unit.

Day 7: The Assignment of Jobs (Lesson Plan Included)

Introduction and Bridge

- Class will begin with Sustained Silent Reading.
- I will give the students a quick review/synopsis of what we read yesterday.
- Before we begin reading today, I will ask if any of the students have any questions about the story and answer any accordingly.
- To start off the lesson today, I will ask students what they want to be when they are older.
 - I will take several student responses.
- After these responses I will then ask the students how they would feel if that choice was taken away, and instead their job was decided for them.
 - I will take several student responses.

Direct Instruction

- I will divide the students in to groups of 4-5 students.
- Each group will then be given a job description, and a handout to fill out.
- The groups will have approximately 20 minutes to work on their handout, which has them describe what a day on the job is like for them, their place in society with this job, how their job affects their life, and whether or not they enjoy their job.
- After students have completed their handouts, they will present their job and information to the class.

Closure

- To wrap up the lesson, we will have a brief discussion on whether or not they think that this system of assigning jobs is affective and efficient.

Day 8: Did I Do Something Wrong?

Introduction and Bridge

- Class will begin with Sustained Silent Reading.
- I will give the students a quick review/synopsis of what we read yesterday.
- Before we begin reading today, I will ask if any of the students have any questions about the story and answer any accordingly.

Direct Instruction

- Today I will be reading Chapters 8 & 9.
- I will be utilizing the Start/Stop reading method again to discuss important aspects of the story with the students.
- After the reading, we will have a class discussion about the special rules list Jonas was given as part of his assigned job.
 - I will ask the students whether or not they think that every job has its own set of special rules, and why or why not they believe so.

Closure

- I will give my students a reminder to be writing in their journals, and that there will be a quiz soon.
- As an exit pass, the students will write down on an index card which one

of Jonas' special rules they think is the most beneficial to him and why they think that one is the most beneficial.

Day 9: Meeting The Giver and Becoming The Receiver

Introduction and Bridge

- Class will begin with Sustained Silent Reading.
- I will give the students a quick review/synopsis of what we read yesterday.
- Before we begin reading today, I will ask if any of the students have any questions about the story and answer any accordingly.

Direct Instruction

- Today I will be reading Chapters 10 & 11.
- (I am allowing this to serve as a catch up day as well, since it is possible that we will not be able to get through as much reading every day)
- If there is still time left in the period, we will review what has happened so far in preparation for a quiz tomorrow.

Closure

- I will remind students to bring their journal entries in again tomorrow, as they will be collected at the end of the period once again.

Day 10: Midway Review

Introduction and Bridge

- Class will begin with Sustained Silent Reading.
- I will give the students a quick review/synopsis of what we read yesterday.
- Before we begin reading today, I will ask if any of the students have any questions about the story and answer any accordingly.

Quiz Time

- I will pass out the quiz to students, and go over the directions with them so that they become familiar with what is on the quiz beforehand.
- I will put a timer up on the board, and inform the students that they have 15 minutes to complete the quiz.
- Students will turn the quizzes in to me as they finish.

Direct Instruction

- Today I will be reading Chapters 12 & 13.
- Once I am done reading, we will spend the day reviewing what has happened thus far in the book.

Closure

- I will collect journal entries, and remind students to start a new sheet for next week's entries.
- Students will discuss what parts of the book they have enjoyed the most so far, and which ones they dislike.

Day 11: Memories

Introduction and Bridge

- Class will begin with Sustained Silent Reading.
- I will give the students a quick review/synopsis of what we read yesterday.
- Before we begin reading today, I will ask if any of the students have any

questions about the story and answer any accordingly.

Direct Instruction

- Today I will be reading Chapters 14 & 15.
- As I read, I will tell students to pay close attention to the way the memories are described.
- When the reading is done, students will be asked to complete a quick write where they explain what the process may be like for Jonas who has never experienced these memories to see them in picture format but with the feelings associated with those memories attached.

Closure

- I will hand back the students' journal entries.
- As a wrap up, students will discuss the difference between physically experiencing something versus experiencing it through memory (i.e. pictures, videos, etc.)

Day 12: My Dystopia (Lesson Plan Included)

Introduction and Bridge

- Class will begin with Sustained Silent Reading.
- I will give the students a quick review/synopsis of what we read yesterday.
- Before we begin reading today, I will ask if any of the students have any questions about the story and answer any accordingly.
- Students will be asked whether or not they would want to live in Jonas' society. If not, would they want to live in a different kind of dystopia, or stick to our real world?

Direct Instruction

- Students will be divided in to groups of 4-5 and given supplies and a handout with instructions.
- The students will be creating their own dystopia for this class period, and must include the various aspects listed on their handout.
 - The aspects include things such as government type, the name of the dystopia, what the jobs are like (are they assigned?), etc.
- Students will elect one member to go and use a computer to do any needed research on government types, etc.
- The students will have approximately 20 minutes to complete their mini project. When they are finished, they will go up to the front of the class and present their dystopian society to the class.

Closure

- Students will vote for which dystopian society they think is the best and why.

Day 13: The Great Dystopian Debate (Lesson Plan Included)

Introduction and Bridge

- Class will begin with Sustained Silent Reading.
- I will give the students a quick review/synopsis of what we read yesterday.
- Before we begin reading today, I will ask if any of the students have any questions about the story and answer any accordingly.

- I will lead the class in a brief discussion that picks up where we ended yesterday with the creation of dystopias.
- Ask the students if the hassle of creating a dystopia is worth the end product.

Direct Instruction

- The class will be divided in half. One class will be for dystopias, and the other half will be against them.
- The class will be given 5 minutes to come up with the arguing points.
- Once the 5 minutes is up, each side will have 2 minutes to present their case. After both sides have calmly stated their cases, they will be allowed a "free for all" for 30 seconds where they can all just go at it.
- After this free for all, the students will reassemble, and we will switch sides and repeat the steps above.
- After the debate is over, students will complete a quick write where they list the pros and cons of dystopias.

Closure

- The students will turn in their quick writes, and in order to leave the class, will give me a simple "for" or "against" dystopias.

Day 14: The Good and The Bad

Introduction and Bridge

- Class will begin with Sustained Silent Reading.
- I will give the students a quick review/synopsis of what we read yesterday.
- Before we begin reading today, I will ask if any of the students have any questions about the story and answer any accordingly.
- We will begin with a quick and thorough review of what we last read since it has been a few days.

Direct Instruction

- Today the students are in charge of reading. They will once again be divided in to groups of 4-5.
- I will assign pages from Chapters 16 & 17.
- Each group will be assigned a set number of pages.
- The group will then read their assigned pages, and summarize the key parts of their section.
- We will convene back as a class where each group will share with the class what happened in their section.

Closure

- I will remind students that their journal entries are due again tomorrow at the end of class, and that they have a quiz tomorrow.
- I will pass out a sheet that summarizes today's chapters for the students, as well as a character chart they can begin looking over to help them review for their final test.

Day 15: Being Released

Introduction and Bridge

- Class will begin with Sustained Silent Reading.
- I will give the students a quick review/synopsis of what we read yesterday.
- Before we begin reading today, I will ask if any of the students have any questions about the story and answer any accordingly.

Quiz Time

- I will pass out the quiz to students, and go over the directions with them so that they become familiar with what is on the quiz beforehand.
- I will put a timer up on the board, and inform the students that they have 15 minutes to complete the quiz.
- Students will turn the quizzes in to me as they finish.

Direct Instruction

- Today I will read Chapters 18 & 19.
- As I read, students will write down items that they think are important to the story line in these two chapters.
- After the reading is complete, the students will participate in a Think, Pair, Share on the topic of 'Being Released'.
 - Students will discuss if this is what they were expecting, what they think of the idea, and whether or not they think it is acceptable.

Closure

- I will collect the students' journal entries, and remind them to start a new page for their final entries.
- I will also remind students to be looking over their character chart.

Day 16: Class Discussion

Introduction and Bridge

- Class will begin with Sustained Silent Reading.
- I will give the students a quick review/synopsis of what we read yesterday.
- Before we begin reading today, I will ask if any of the students have any questions about the story and answer any accordingly.
- To transition to our class time today, I will have had a poll up on the Smart Board with various topics listed. As the students entered the classroom I would have them vote for which topic they wanted to cover the most in our class discussion today. I will refer to this poll to begin our class time and inform the students what we will be talking about for the period.

Direct Instruction

- If we are behind on any reading, we will catch up first.
- I will begin to discuss with the class the topics they voted as being most concerned about/wanting more clarification on.
- We will continue the discussion until everyone's questions have been answered and the entire class is on the same page.

Closure

- I will remind the students that they have their test in a couple days, and to think of any questions they may have for me concerning the text.

Day 17: Planning

Introduction and Bridge

- Class will begin with Sustained Silent Reading.
- I will give the students a quick review/synopsis of what we read yesterday.
- Before we begin reading today, I will ask if any of the students have any questions about the story and answer any accordingly.
- I will ask the students for examples of risk they have seen so far in the text, and discuss the examples they have come up with.

Direct Instruction

- Today I will be reading Chapters 20 & 21.
- Once the reading is finished, we will participate in a modified version of an inner/outer literature circle.
 - I will do it by sides to save time in moving the desks around.
- The students on the designated talking side will discuss the idea of risk and whether or not they think that taking risks is wise. The discussion could also move to whether or not risks are necessary, and whether the students would take the same risk that Jonas did.
- Once the designated side has had a chance to discuss, I will then switch sides.
- We will then convene as a class to finish discussing the topic

Closure

- As an exit pass, students will tell me a simple yes or no as to whether or not they would take the same risk Jonas did.

Day 18: Risking It All

Introduction and Bridge

- Class will begin with Sustained Silent Reading.
- I will give the students a quick review/synopsis of what we read yesterday.
- Before we begin reading today, I will ask if any of the students have any questions about the story and answer any accordingly.
- I will ask the class to make some predictions on how the story will end before we begin reading.

Direct Instruction

- Today I will read Chapters 22 & 23.
- This is also a built in catch up day in case we have gotten behind.

Closure

- I will remind students that their test is tomorrow, so study hard!

Day 19: Final Review and Discussion

Test Day

- Students will come in to class as usual, but there will be no SSR.
- Students will be handed their tests, and I will go over the instructions with them. They have the remainder of the class period to work on their test.
- If the students finish before the period ends, they will turn their test in to me I will give them the instructions for their final writing assignment.

- For those that take the entire class period to finish, they will grab the instructions for the writing assignment.
- I will also remind the students to turn in their journal entries tomorrow.

Day 20: This is My Ending

Introduction and Bridge

- Class will begin with Sustained Silent Reading.
- I will have a brief discussion with the students about how they felt they did on the test yesterday.

Direct Instruction

- Students have the day to work on their writing assignment.
 - Their writing assignment consists of them writing an extended ending to the novel. There is not a required length, but the students will have to write an analysis that explains why their extended ending ended the way it did and they must cite two examples from the text that would make their ending plausible.

Closure

- I will tell students that if they finished their assignment to turn it in, otherwise it is due in two days.
- I will ask the class for a general consensus on whether or not they enjoyed the unit, and which activities they liked the best.

Part II: The Daily Lesson Plans

“Introduction”

Lesson 1 of 20

Context:

The purpose of this lesson is to introduce students to the theme of ‘Risking it All’ which is the overarching theme for Unit 4. Everything that students will read under this unit will deal with this theme so it is important that students have a working knowledge and understanding of what the theme entails. By having students participate in an introduction to this theme, they will be able to have better understanding of the novels they read and how their individual themes relate to this overarching theme.

Primary Instructional Objectives and Common Core State Standards:

Cognitive:

- 4. Students will be able to understand key concepts throughout the unit.
 - 4.1 Students will be able to understand the meaning of risking it all.

Affective:

- 7. Students will be able to follow the directions.
 - 7.1 Students will be able to read through the instruction given both by the teacher and in the handouts provided.
- 8. Students will be able to work cooperatively in a group setting.
 - 8.1 Students will be able to work cooperatively with their peers in order to complete a group assignment.

Performance:

- 12. Students will be able to share their work with the class.
 - 12.1 Students will be able to present their work to the class in order display the work they have completed.
- 14. Students will be able to actively participate in class.
 - 14.1 Students will actively discuss various topics in class provided by the teacher.
- 15. Students will be able to demonstrate the standard conventions of English in their various works.
 - 15.1 Students will use correct grammar skills in the completion of any work, whether it be group work or individual.

L8.2- Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

Materials/Technology Required:

Whiteboard

Writing Utensils

Paper

Group Scenario Handout

Time: 50 Minutes

Instructional Procedures:

I. Sustained Silent Reading (10 minutes)

II. Bridge (5 minutes)

- I will ask the students if they ever take risks.
 - I will then have them name the risk they took (as long as it is school appropriate) and why it was a risk for them.
- Then, I will have students discuss their opinion on what it then means to 'risk it all'.
 - Lastly, I will see if they have any real world examples of people who have risked it all.

III. Group Work. (10 minutes)

- Students will be assigned to groups in order to work on their understanding of risk.
- I will divide students in to groups of 4-5.
- Each group will be given a scenario where at the end they have to decide how they respond to the situation.
 - Students will decide if how they respond is taking a risk, and if so, what the consequences may be from taking that particular risk.

IV. Presentations (5 minutes)

- We will convene as a class and have students present their scenarios and the decisions that they made.

V. Class Discussion (10 minutes)

- We will discuss as a class the importance of taking risks.
- I will ask the students if their scenarios would turn out differently if they were to have not taken a risk.
- We will then discuss if sometimes risks need to be taken in order to set change in to motion.
 - I will give examples of this.

VI. Closure (10 minutes)

- I will show students a book trailer for the novel they are about to read.
- After this video, I will tell students to imagine what life would be like to live in a world with no love, no feeling, and no choices.
- I will tell the students this is what we will start with the next day.

Evaluation:

Students' discussion (14.1)

Students' group work (8.1, 12.1, 15.1)

Accommodations:

Not needed for this particular lesson

In Retrospect/In Reflection:

Lesson 1:
“Introduction”

Supplementary Materials Include:
Group scenario handouts

Group Scenarios

Group One

You are with some friends who want to sneak in to an old abandoned warehouse. There usually isn't much security watching the property, but you have heard about people who have gotten hurt from the rundown condition of the building. When it comes time to leave that night, what do you do?

Group Two

Your parents are out of town for the weekend and they have left you in charge of the house and your younger sibling. You both ride the bus to and from school since you do not have your driver's license yet. When you get home from school one day, you realize that you left an important assignment that is due tomorrow in your locker. One of your parents' cars is parked in the garage and you know where the keys are. What do you do?

Group Three

You've waited until the last minute again to start a research paper for your English class. There is no way that you can complete this in time and receive a good grade on it. You've heard about some friends who sometimes copy papers from the internet and begin to think that may be your way out of this predicament. What do you do?

Group Four

One of your friend's parents has decided to take a group of you all skydiving. You are pretty sure that you are terrified of heights, but this seems like a once in a lifetime opportunity to do something fun with your friends. When your friend asks you if you will be joining them, what do you do?

Group Five

Your parents gave you \$20 to spend on lunch this week. While hanging out with some friends one afternoon, they decide to make a bet on whether or not anyone made a passing grade on the Science test they took earlier. If you decide to participate, you have to state whether or not you think you made a passing grade. If your grade matches what you said, then you keep your \$20. Those who were wrong though have to give up their cash, and it is divided amongst those who guessed correctly. What do you do?

Group Six

A group of kids have begun to bully a student because of his interest in a particular TV show. You think it is juvenile of them to bother someone over something like this, but you don't personally know the student. You could do something about this. What do you do?

“The Assignment of Jobs”

Lesson 7 of 20

Context:

The purpose of this lesson is to have students relate to the experience that is being had by the main character in the book, Jonas. By putting students in a similar situation, they can evaluate what it would be like to have the freedom of choice taken away from them. It also gives students time to reflect on perhaps why they may have strong feelings towards something as basic as freedom of choice.

Primary Instructional Objectives and Common Core State Standards:

Cognitive:

- 4. Students will be able to understand key concepts throughout the unit.
 - 4.2 Students will be able to understand the importance of freedom of choice.
 - 4.3 Students will be able to understand the role of freedom of choice in a society.

Affective:

- 7. Students will be able to follow the directions.
 - 7.1 Students will be able to read through the instruction given both by the teacher and in the handouts provided.
- 8. Students will be able to work cooperatively in a group setting.
 - 8.1 Students will be able to work cooperatively with their peers in order to complete a group assignment.
 - 8.2 Students will be able to work with their group towards a common viewpoint that represents their work.

Performance:

- 12. Students will be able to share their work with the class.
 - 12.1 Students will be able to present their work to the class in order display the work they have completed.
- 14. Students will be able to actively participate in class.
 - 14.1 Students will actively discuss various topics in class provided by the teacher.
- 15. Students will be able to demonstrate the standard conventions of English in their various works.
 - 15.1 Students will use correct grammar skills in the completion of any work, whether it be group work or individual.

L8.2- Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

Materials/Technology Required:

Whiteboard

Writing Utensils

Paper

Instructions Handout

Time: 50 Minutes

Instructional Procedures:

I. Sustained Silent Reading (10 minutes)

II. Bridge (5 minutes)

- To start off the lesson today, I will ask students what they want to be when they are older.
 - I will take several student responses and discuss with them why they want to go in to that particular field, and if they think they will be able to obtain that job one day.
- After these responses I will then ask the students how they would feel if that choice was taken away, and instead their job was decided for them.
 - I will take several student responses and discuss with them why they may feel it would be unfair to have their freedom of choice taken away from them.

III. Group Work (20 minutes)

- I will divide the students in to groups of 4-5 students.
- Each group will then be given a job description, and a handout to fill out.
- The groups will have approximately 20 minutes to work on their handout, which has them describe what a day on the job is like for them, their place in society with this job, how their job affects their life, and whether or not they enjoy their job.
- After students have completed their handouts, they will present their job and information to the class.

IV. Class Discussion (10 minutes)

- I will ask the students how they felt while waiting to see what job they were assigned. After, I will then ask them how they felt once they received their job title.
- We will then discuss what affect then the freedom of choice has on a society now that they have had small chance to experience it,
 - I will ask the students if they possibly feel like they have limited freedom of choice currently since they are minors.

V. Closure (5 minutes)

-To wrap up the lesson, we will have a brief discussion on whether or not they think that this system of assigning jobs is affective and efficient.

Evaluation:

Students' discussion (14.1)

Students' group work (8.1, 15.1)

Students' presentations (12.1)

Accommodations:

Not needed for this particular lesson

In Retrospect/In Reflection:

Lesson 7:
“The Assignment of Jobs”

Supplementary Materials Include:
Job Position Titles and Brief Descriptions
Instructions

Job Titles and Brief Descriptions

Street Cleaners

As a street cleaner, it is your job to ensure that the streets are always kept neat and tidy. There should never be any litter on the ground, or any other miscellaneous objects in the road that might get in somebody's way.

Landscape Workers

You are a landscape worker. You have to make sure that our landscapes stay trimmed and healthy. Trimming hedges, cutting the grass, and planting various flowers and trees will help keep our landscapes looking top-notch.

Food Delivery

There are no grocery stores here in this society. It is your job in food delivery to ensure that every family is given their food rations for the week. You must work in a timely manner to ensure that you reach every family dwelling.

Nurturer

As a nurturer, you play a very important role in this society. You and your fellow nurturers are the sole caregivers of every newborn baby in our society for the first few weeks of life. You must ensure that they are in good care until it is time for their family placement.

Age Instructor

As an age instructor, you may be assigned to any various age year ranging from 3-11. No matter the age year you are assigned, it is your job to teach your age year the correct manners and life skills for their age.

Department of Justice

As a worker in the department of justice, you help take care of anyone who may be trying to break the rules. The society hangs in a fragile balance, and anyone who breaks the set rules must be dealt with to ensure that the society stays intact.

Instructions

Directions

Once you are assigned your job title, work as a group to answer the following questions. Write at least 5 sentences (a paragraph) for each question, and make sure that they are complete sentences!

Questions

What is a day on the job is like for you? Describe what you do and the people you interact with.

What is your place in society with this job title? Are you considered a valuable asset?

How does your job affect your life in general? Do people think you have a decent job? Or feel sorry that you were assigned this particular job?

Do you enjoy your job? Why or why not?

“My Dystopia”

Lesson 12 of 20

Context:

This lesson is designed to give students a chance to interact with one of the key elements of this novel: dystopia. The students will be creating their own dystopia so that they can experience what it is like to try control every aspect of someone's life to ensure that they live the way they are meant to live by the society that they are living in. It gives students a chance to stretch their creative wings as well, since they must design various aspects of the society.

Primary Instructional Objectives and Common Core State Standards:

Cognitive:

- 3. Students will be able to identify the key elements of a dystopian novel.
 - 3.1 Students will be able to implement the key elements of a dystopia in the creation of their own.
- 4. Students will be able to understand key concepts throughout the unit.
 - 4.4 Students will be able to understand how the key components of a dystopia work in order to have a working society.

Affective:

- 7. Students will be able to follow the directions.
 - 7.1 Students will be able to read through the instruction given both by the teacher and in the handouts provided.
- 8. Students will be able to work cooperatively in a group setting.
 - 8.1 Students will be able to work cooperatively with their peers in order to complete a group assignment.
 - 8.2 Students will be able to work with their group towards a common viewpoint that represents their work.
- 10. Students will be able to synthesize various materials to further their knowledge.
 - 10.1 Students will be able to bring various resources together in order to create an ideal dystopia.

Performance:

- 11. Students will be able to create their own pieces of work.
 - 11.1 Students will be able to create their own dystopia.
- 12. Students will be able to share their work with the class.
 - 12.1 Students will be able to present their work to the class in order to display the work they have completed.
- 14. Students will be able to actively participate in class.
 - 14.1 Students will actively discuss various topics in class provided by the teacher.

15. Students will be able to demonstrate the standard conventions of English in their various works.

15.1 Students will use correct grammar skills in the completion of any work, whether it be group work or individual.

L8.2- Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

Materials/Technology Required:

Whiteboard

Writing Utensils

Paper

Markers

Colored Pencils

Instructions

Time: 50 Minutes

Instructional Procedures:

I. Sustained Silent Reading (10 minutes)

II. Bridge (5 minutes)

- Students will be asked whether or not they would want to live in Jonas' society. If not, would they want to live in a different kind of dystopia, or stick to our real world?

III. Small Group Work (25 minutes)

- Students will be divided into groups of 4-5 and given supplies and a handout with instructions.

- I will go over the instructions with the students and let them know what I expect of them during this process.

- The students will be creating their own dystopia for this class period, and must include the various aspects listed on their handout.

- The aspects include things such as government type, the name of the dystopia, what the jobs are like (are they assigned?), etc.

- Students will elect one member to go and use a computer to do any needed research on government types, etc.

- Students will be allowed a maximum of 10 minutes on the computer. Every group will send their elected person at the same time so that the groups will convene back at once.

- The students will have approximately 20 minutes to complete their mini project.

IV. Presentations (5-10 minutes)

-When they are finished, they will go up to the front of the class and present their dystopian society to the class.

V. Closure (as the students leave)

-Students will vote for which dystopian society they think is the best and why on an index card that I will give them.

Evaluation:

Students' discussion (14.1)

Students' group work (8.1, 15.1)

Students' final product (3.1, 10.1, 11.1)

Students' presentation (12.1)

Accommodations:

Not needed for this particular lesson

In Retrospect/In Reflection:

Lesson 12:
“My Dystopia”

Supplementary Materials Include:
Instructions

Instructions

You have been given a piece of poster board, and now you must create an advertisement for the dystopia you will be creating. Below is a list of the items that you need to include on your ad. Be sure to include all of these items so that we are well informed about your new dystopia!

Include:

- Form of government
- Name of person in charge
- The dystopia's flag
- The dystopia's motto
- A brief explanation as to how you have control over your society without the population knowing
- Population size
- Any other information that you feel would make someone want to live in your society!

Brainstorm your ideas below:

“The Great Dystopian Debate”

Lesson 13 of 20

Context:

The purpose of this lesson is to give students a chance to actively engage in discussion that they might otherwise not have the opportunity to do. Students enjoy being able to voice their opinion, especially when they are in a setting to be heard by their peers. The debate is a great way for students to gather evidence both from their text as well as from other sources in order to prove a point. Debates are a great interactive tool to get students invested in their learning, and this is why I have one implemented in my unit plan.

Primary Instructional Objectives and Common Core State Standards:

Cognitive:

- 5. Students will be able to defend their work.
 - 5.1 Students will be able to defend their beliefs on whether or not dystopias should exist.

Affective:

- 7. Students will be able to follow the directions.
 - 7.2 Students will be able to follow the rules that are designated by the teacher for this current setting.
- 8. Students will be able to work cooperatively in a group setting.
 - 8.1 Students will be able to work cooperatively with their peers in order to complete a group assignment.
 - 8.2 Students will be able to work with their group towards a common viewpoint that represents their work.
- 9. Students will be able to communicate effectively in a class setting.
 - 9.1 Students will speak in a manner that is appropriate for the setting.

Performance:

- 14. Students will be able to actively participate in class.
 - 14.1 Students will actively discuss various topics in class provided by the teacher.
 - 14.2 Students will be able to participate in a class debate where they argue over various points.

Materials/Technology Required:

Whiteboard

Time: 50 Minutes

Instructional Procedures:

I. Sustained Silent Reading (10 minutes)

II. Bridge (5 minutes)

- I will lead the class in a brief discussion that picks up where we ended yesterday with the creation of dystopias.
- I will ask the students if the hassle of creating a dystopia is worth the end product, and discuss from there.

III. Class Debate (20 minutes)

- The class will be divided in half. One class will be for dystopias, and the other half will be against them.
- The class will be given 5 minutes to come up with the arguing points for their side.
- A timer will be placed on the board so students know how much time they have left remaining
- Once the 5 minutes is up, each side will have 2 minutes to present their case. After both sides have calmly stated their cases, they will be allowed a "free for all" for 30 seconds where they can all just go at it.
- After this free for all, the students will reassemble, and we will switch sides and repeat the steps above.

IV. Writing Activity (5 minutes)

- After the debate is over, students will complete a quick write where they list the pros and cons of dystopias.
- Underneath their pros and cons, students will then write a brief reflection about the debate and whether or not they thought it was successful in helping them learn about dystopias and hearing others' opinions.

V. Class Share (5 minutes)

- When the students are done with their quick writes, I will ask for volunteers to share some of their pros and cons. We will discuss some of the most common ones.

VI. Closure (as students leave the class)

- The students will turn in their quick writes, and in order to leave the class, will give me a simple "for" or "against" dystopias.

Evaluation:

Students' discussion (14.1)

Class debate (5.1, 7.2, 14.2)

Accommodations:

Not needed for this particular lesson

In Retrospect/In Reflection:

Part III: Evaluation

Evaluation Philosophy

During this unit I wanted to focus on what my students were learning and taking away from the readings. I think a lot of time students are always simply given reading quizzes while they read the book and then are supposed to come up with a master take away by the time they finish and take their final test on the book. I wanted to ensure that my students were constantly finding takeaways while they read, which is why I created various activities for them to complete along the way.

Throughout the unit I incorporated as many different kinds of activities as possible in order to capture the interest of all my students. There will always be the students who enjoy writing over everything else, just like there are some students who would rather draw the entire class. I wanted to play to the multiple strengths that my students have in the classroom and really give them a chance to actively participate in their learning rather than sitting at their desk and listening to me read to them day after day.

Evaluation is always seen as an evil being amongst students. It is the one thing that turns a unit they enjoyed in to something to be despised because they can't remember every detail for the final test. I wanted to take this "end of the unit" stress off of my students and evaluate them in various ways throughout so that way they could enjoy the unit the entire way through. By doing this, I also get to see the connections my students are making with the novel from the very beginning and watch their growth until the end.

Since I will constantly be evaluating my students in their work, I will be able to also constantly provide them feedback on their work. This was one of the reasons I wanted them to do nightly journal entries. Over the weekend I can see what insights my students have and give individual attention to them so that they feel important. Finally, I also wanted to include every student in every aspect of the class. This is why there are multiple examples of group work every week. Those who might struggle on their own benefit from being in a group setting often times.

All of these methods of evaluation are brought together to ensure that I am evaluating my students on a daily basis so I can ensure their understanding of the material. This helps me prevent students from falling behind, and instead, helping them stay on target with our information. While evaluation is a necessary classroom tool, it can be beneficial to the students rather than harmful.

Methods of Evaluation

For the majority of class work that the students complete, they will receive completion and participation grades that will translate in to points for their overall grade. The only items graded on a numerical scale are the quizzes and the test at the end.

With the majority of the grades being for either completion or participation, this means that most forms of my evaluation are informal. Having informal evaluation strategies though allows me to have more of them though.

Informal:

Class Discussions

Quick Writes

Group Work

Class Debate

Exit Passes

Formal:

Mini Projects: Job Assignment, Dystopia Creating, Extended Ending Writing

Quizzes

Test

Part IV: Works Cited List and Reflective Addendum

Works Cited

Dr. Carol Pope [NCSU professor] (for items such as Pre/During/Post writing, Exit Slips, Stop/Start Reading, and group Quick Writes)

Ms. Betsy Nay [Cooperating Teacher] (for general ideas on mini projects such as the the job assignment and dystopia creation)

Kirby, Dan and Tom Liner. Inside Out: Developmental Strategies for Teaching Writing. Boynton/Cook, 1998.

Dear Reader,

When discussing with my Cooperating teacher what I would be teaching in the spring semester, we looked at the new common core standards that schools now follow for Language Arts. Once we pinpointed when I wanted to teach my unit, we took a guess as to where in the standards map they would be. The overarching theme for my unit is "Risking It All" and covers various novels, short stories, and other works. However, when we decided that *The Giver* would be the best thing for me to teach, I wanted to add to that theme for the title of my unit rather than simply naming my unit after the common core standards. I wanted to make my theme revolve specifically around the novel I would be teaching, which is how I decided on "The Decision to Risk It All for The Giver". It also helps to show that when we take risks, we are making a conscious decision to do so and for a specific purpose.

I feel as though the strength of my unit lies in the multiple ways I am constantly informally evaluating my students. They will always be doing work that solidifies the ideas they have just read about, and at the same time the work is interesting and helpful. There is also strength in the way I have given such power to my students throughout the unit through mini projects and class discussions. I wanted them to be the leaders of what they learn, and I just wanted to guide them in the correct direction along the way. For students to have so much control over their learning can be scary, but I think that it really benefits the students in the end.

One of the main concerns that I have with my unit is the reading schedule. Originally I had wanted a three-week plan but found it impossible to do anything else other than solely read in that amount of time. This is why my unit as of now is four weeks long. This is the one area that I would like to continue to work on if I had more time, this way I could create a more accurate schedule that would reflect perhaps page numbers to read through rather than chapters.

I really feel like the only limitation I had with this unit was placed by me. Originally I had wanted to go with the "ideal" unit plan, but once I learned that I would be reading to my students every day during class rather than assigning reading as homework, I wanted to prepare myself for what kind of work I could possibly get done in a school day in that fashion. I definitely think that there will be some modifications to my unit once I begin teaching because things rarely ever follow the plans made. I am ok with this though and look forward to being able to revise this as the spring semester plays out.

The one thing that I will be sure to pay close attention to in terms of implementing this unit in the field is that I make sure to as much fun with it as I had intended when I created it. This novel was one of my favorites in middle school, and I want to share this with my students and make it an enjoyable experience for them. This is what I want to pay attention to when I teach this unit, is that my students are enjoying what they are learning.

If I had to evaluate my unit, I would probably give it a 3 overall. I am generally very critical of my work, but I do think that this represents my best efforts to make a fun and educational unit plan for 8th graders. I do think that I could implement more activities in to the lesson, such as more technology, poetry and social studies activities, etc. This would make it a more well rounded unit overall and I think that activities such as those would benefit my unit greatly.

To future students, I would say don't sweat the small stuff. I found myself worrying over the tiniest details, such as the format, and that often distracted me from the bigger picture. I would also suggest that students take their time when creating their unit, and to have patience. There will be editing mistakes, but that is why you save often and use the undo feature. For any students that are like me and revise as they go, I would say to just make sure to keep an extra copy of your previous work somewhere in case you wind up completely unhappy with what you have done!

V. Process

The following pages consist of notes, outlines, research, initial drafts, and an e-mail correspondence, which reflect on my unit creation process.

*Many are items that were in separate Word documents as I drafted them.

Initial Lesson Plan

Introduction to the 'Risking it All' theme

Context:

The purpose of this lesson is to introduce students to the theme of 'Risking it All' which is the overarching theme for Unit 4. Everything that students will read under this unit will deal with this theme so it is important that students have a working knowledge and understanding of what the theme entails. By having students participate in an introduction to this theme, they will be able to have better understanding of the novels they read and how their individual themes relate to this overarching theme.

Primary Instructional Objectives and Common Core State Standards:

Students will be able to understand the theme 'Risking it All'.

Materials/Technology Required:

Whiteboard

Writing Utensils

Paper

Time: 50 Minutes

Instructional Procedures:

I. Sustained Silent Reading (10 minutes)

II. Bridge (5 minutes)

- ask students if they ever take risks
 - have them name the risk they took (as long as it is school appropriate) and why it was a risk for them
- have students discuss their opinion on what it then means to 'risk it all'
 - see if they have any real world examples of people who have risked it all

III. Students will be assigned to groups in order to work on their understanding of risk. (10 minutes)

- divide students in to groups of 4
- each group will be given a scenario where at the end they have to decide how they respond to the situation
 - students will decide if how they respond is taking a risk, and if so, what the consequences may be from taking that particular risk

IV. Convene as a class and have students present their scenarios and the decisions they made. (5 minutes)

V. Discuss as a class the importance of taking risks (10 minutes)

- ask students if their scenarios would turn out differently if they were to have not taken a risk
- discuss if sometimes risks need to be taken in order to set change in to motion
 - give examples of this

VI. Wrap Up (10 minutes)

- introduce students to the novel that they will be reading that deals with risking it all: *The Giver*
- give students a hook for the story that gets them interested in getting ready to read the novel
- assign homework
- go over any upcoming due dates

Evaluation:

Students' discussion

Students' group work

Students' decision/choice making

Accommodations:

Not needed for this particular lesson

In Retrospect/In Reflection:

N/A

Appendix of Materials Needed:

Scenario hand-outs

Unit Questions:

What motivates people to take risks?

Are risks necessary for change?

Do all worthy risks involve sacrifice?

Unit Plan Outline:

Introduction

Principles

Focus

Questions-list

Goals-broad

Objectives

3-5 cognitive

2-3 affective

3-4 performance

Common Core

Individual Lesson Plans

Name and Date

Lesson Title

Plan #

Context

Objectives and CCSS

Materials/Technology Needed

Time

Instructional Procedures

Bridge

Steps

Evaluation

Accommodations

Reflection

Appendix of Materials

Objectives

COGNITIVE

Interpret the literature they read

Understand the importance of what they read

AFFECTIVE

Collaborate effectively with peers

Express themselves creatively

PERFORMANCE

Create their own work that deals with risk

Carol Pope

to me

Hi, Stephanie...

Re: *The Giver*: One clarification...will the students have copies to "read along" as you read? (I assume that will be the case.) Here are a few thoughts that come to mind...

- 1) Oral Reading can be a powerful teaching tool...i.e., "good" oral reading provides a voice for kids to hear, a language rhythm (esp. good for ELL students and at-risk students), and varied dialogue tones, text mood, etc.
- 2) Remember to use the "pre/during/post" reading model you know about...both before the text and before each day's reading...that can help reinforce/review "what happened," make predictions about what's next, etc.--all markers of good readers
- 3) Is it possible to "act out" (i.e., role play, etc.) something that "happened" in the reading--a prediction of what's next, etc. (Those could be very quick ones...in case the teacher has an expectation re: how much has to be "covered" every day.)
- 4) Videos: I notice that there are quite a few scenes from the "movie" available via You Tube (as well as interview, etc. with Lowry)...you could do some scenes to enhance reading along the way, as a "review"/how this visual varies from your own vision, etc.
- 5) Quick Writes: What students remember from the previous day's reading...what their predictions might be, etc....read aloud some students/even your own quick write... You could even do a quick write (exit slip) at end of class on some days re: questions, predictions, most interesting part today, stuff like that...
- 6) Recording: Perhaps you could even "record" an excellent reading for the day (even perhaps enlist other readers' voices for dialogue, etc.) and then use that recording for that day's reading/or part of the day's reading
- 7) Stop/Start: Stop at important/natural spot...and review...what did we just hear? who's speaking? what's happening? what are we learning about characters? setting? etc. (other literary elements, etc.)
- 8) Small Groups: Focused quick 5 minute talks about specific questions you might provide for each group...they could "report out" orally...OR write a group quick write that they turn into you; you give them credit, etc. for that group discussion
- 9) Jigsaw...

Stephanie...I think you could make the "oral reading" process work FOR you by integrating some ways of energizing the daily focus...so that it doesn't become a "put your head on your desk while I read aloud" temptation for students. You're a creative thinker about lesson/unit plans...so just don't forget what you know. You can turn this into an intriguing, engaging process for kids...just think open about ways to "get through" the book...but enhance the reading as you go along.

I hope this might be helpful to prime your pump...for planning and thinking. Let me know if I can help further...

Carol